

LINCOLN
in
HARTFORD



J. DOYLE DEWITT

LINCOLN

in

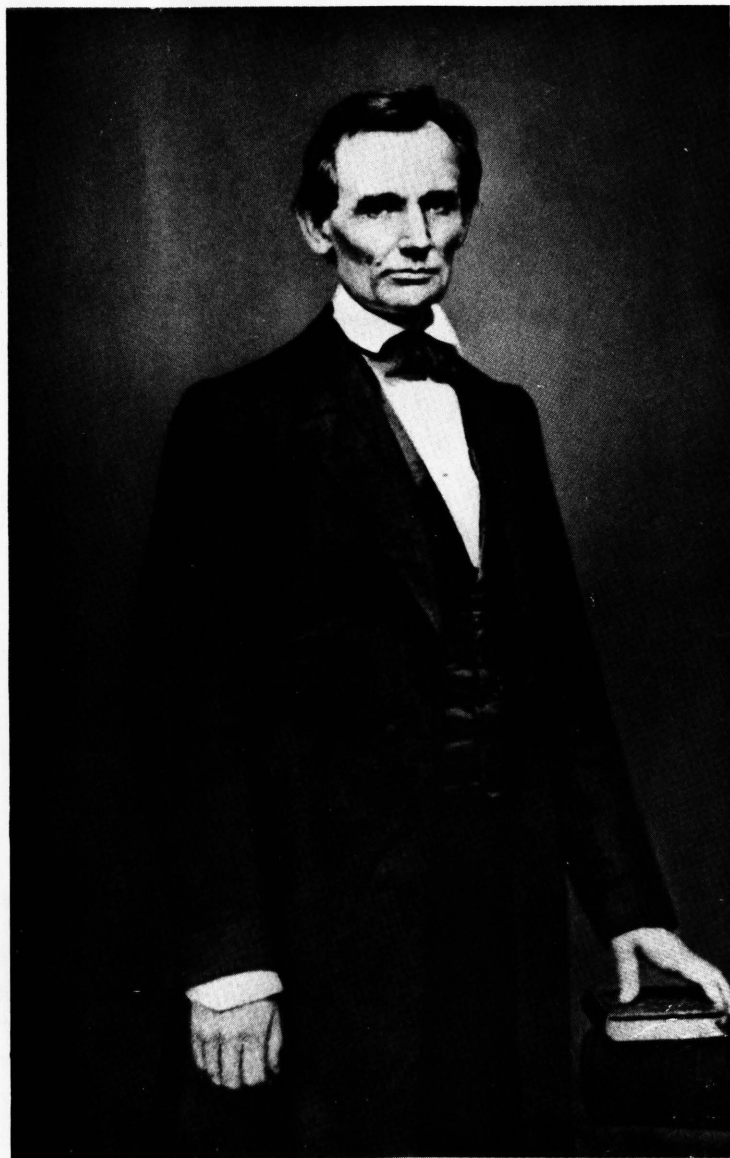
HARTFORD

by

J. DOYLE DEWITT

Member of The Connecticut
Civil War Centennial Commission

*Privately printed in support of the activities of
the Connecticut Civil War Centennial Commission.*



The so-called "Cooper Institute" photograph of Lincoln, taken by Matthew Brady on February 27, 1860, one week before his appearance in Hartford.

LINCOLN

in

HARTFORD

BY J. DOYLE DeWITT

As a result of the prominence his name had received in the Middle West following the Senatorial debates with Douglas in 1858, Lincoln was invited by a Young Men's Club in New York to deliver one of a series of "Lyceum Lectures" at Plymouth Church in Brooklyn, whose pastor was Henry Ward Beecher. He accepted and advised them that his fee would be \$300. Inasmuch as this would have depleted their treasury, they offered him \$200. Lincoln accepted but requested that he be allowed to give a political talk. The club agreed, changed the location to Cooper Institute and established an admission charge.

Lincoln recognized that such an address was essential to his candidacy for President as it would provide the means for the people in the East to see him and to hear an exposition of his views. He also had another reason for wanting to come East. His son, Robert, had gone East in the fall of 1859 hoping to enter Harvard. He flunked fifteen of the sixteen entrance examinations so it was decided to enroll him at Phillips Academy at Exeter, New Hampshire for a year to prepare for Harvard. The parents were not wholly reassured that Robert would not fail a second time and hence it was thought advisable that the father find out first-hand what progress the son was making.

Lincoln worked diligently on his speech, bought a new suit of black clothes and left Springfield for New York on Thursday, February 23, arriving on Saturday, February 25. He went to hear Beecher preach on Sunday, had his picture taken by Matthew Brady during the day Monday, and went to the Cooper Institute by streetcar at eight o'clock that evening.

THE DAILY COURANT.

HARTFORD, CONN.
WEDNESDAY MORNING, FEB. 29, 1860.

Another Republican Rally!**CITY HALL—FRIDAY EVENING NEXT.**

The Hon. ABRAM LINCOLN, who canvassed the State of Illinois in opposition to Stephen A. Douglas, and beat Douglas by 3508 votes, is to speak in this city to the Republicans of our vicinity on Friday evening next, at the City Hall. There will be great curiosity to see and hear him, and a rousing turn-out is inevitable. The enthusiasm of the People is irrepressible, and the great trouble is to find a hall large enough to contain half of those who want to hear. It will surprise some to learn that Douglas of Illinois was beaten in his own State, although owing to the manner in which Illinois was districted by a Democratic Legislature he was enabled to secure his election; but the official vote, as recorded in the office of the Illinois Secretary of State, presents the following figures:

Whole vote of Illinois.....	250,571
Abram Lincoln's vote.....	124,698
Stephen A. Douglas' vote.....	121,190
Administration candidate.....	4,693

Proving, as we said, that Lincoln led Douglas 3508 votes on the popular canvass. All men of all shades of party creed will be interested to hear the man who felled the "Little Giant of the West" in debate.



Local newspapers announce Lincoln's forthcoming visit to Hartford. Note the spelling of Lincoln's first name in the DAILY COURANT.

The Evening Press.

HARTFORD:
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 28.

Things About Town.**KEEP THE BALL ROLLING!****Three Cheers for "Abe Lincoln"!**

We have the pleasure of announcing that Hon. Abraham Lincoln, of Illinois, will address the citizens of Hartford upon the great political questions at issue, on Friday evening next, in the City Hall, beginning at 7½ o'clock.

The speech of Mr. Lincoln in New York, on Monday evening receives the most unqualified praise. The *Tribune* says that "no man ever before made such an impression on his first appeal to a New York audience."

The Evening Press.

HARTFORD:
SATURDAY, MARCH 3.

Things About Town.**REPUBLICAN RALLY!**

ADDRESS BY

Hon. ABRAHAM LINCOLN!

Hon. Abraham Lincoln of Illinois will address the citizens of Hartford on Monday evening March 5th, at the City Hall. The doors will open precisely at 7 o'clock: the meeting will be called to order at 7½ o'clock. There will not be another disappointment. The first we can excuse; our New Hampshire brethren, whose election takes place on Tuesday the 13th, insisted upon Mr. Lincoln's remaining with them two or three days longer. He will speak at New Haven, Tuesday, evening, Meriden, Wednesday evening, and Woonsocket, R. I., Thursday evening next.

His speech was well received and when he closed with the memorable words "let us have faith that right makes might, and in that faith let us to the end dare to do our duty as we understand it" he was a success.

He left the next day to visit Robert and make a series of speeches in New England where state elections were approaching. He spoke at Railroad Hall in Providence on February 28, spent February 29 in transit to Exeter, spoke at Concord and Manchester on March 1st, at Dover on March 2nd, at Exeter on March 3rd and spent Sunday, March 4th with Robert at the Academy.

The addition of two speeches to his original schedule "to try to help the New Hampshire brethren"—caused some anxious moments in Hartford. He had agreed to speak here on Friday, March 2nd, and his appearance had been so advertised. It was not until Friday morning that he wired the Hartford Republicans that he would be unable to speak that night but would definitely speak on Monday night, March 5th. The Hartford evening newspapers carried notice of the postponement, but several hundred people trooped to the City Hall that night unaware of the last minute change of plans.

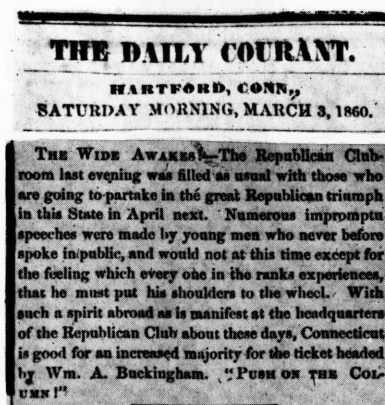
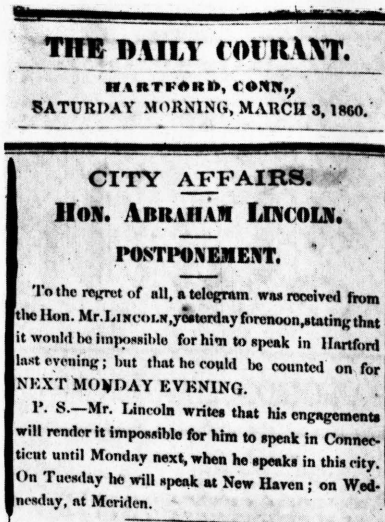
Lincoln arrived in Hartford by train on the afternoon of Monday, March 5th. He was a guest at Mayor Allyn's house on Trumbull Street. Later as he walked up Asylum Street, he stopped at the bookstore of Brown & Gross, located on the southwest corner of Main and Asylum Streets, where he met and conversed with Gideon Welles, then an editorial writer for the *Hartford Evening Press*, located at 66 State Street. Tradition has it that the future President Lincoln, and his future Secretary of the Navy, Welles, sat conversing on a bench near the front door in the store placed there by the proprietors as a convenience for passengers waiting for the horsecars that operated on Main Street.

At the appointed time, Lincoln arrived at City Hall, then located on Market between Temple and Kingsley Streets. An overflowing crowd greeted him with considerable curiosity and moderate enthusiasm. Lincoln had written his wife the day before from Exeter that he was having difficulty making so many speeches "before reading audiences who had already seen all my ideas in print." He spoke for over two hours from notes he had made on a small sheet of paper. Of the conviction with which he spoke, *The Courant* the next morning

said: "There could not have been even a ten year old boy in that crowd at City Hall, who did not leave the room satisfied that Mr. Lincoln was right, and had argued his points man-fashion." *The Evening Press* said "He is an effective speaker, because he is earnest, strong, honest, simple in style, and clear as crystal in his logic."

Both newspapers reported the speech in full (their versions differ slightly due to the difficulties of reporting in a crowded hall without a prepared text). *The Courant* subheaded its report of the speech with "The Danger of Indifference." *The Evening Press* with "Popular Sovereignty, or the 'Don't Care' policy, exposed." Probably the loudest applause followed this passage:

"Now what is the difficulty (with the slavery question)? One sixth of the population of the United States is slave. One man in every six, one woman of every six, one child of every six, is a slave. Those who own them look upon them as property, and nothing else. ***The cash value of these slaves, at a moderate estimate, is \$2,000,000,000. This amount of property value has a vast influence on the minds of its owners, very naturally. The same amount of property would have an equal influence upon us if owned in the North. ***On the other hand, the free states carry



The article which inspired the name "Wide Awakes."



Founders and Officers of the "Wide Awakes" as shown on the front pages of the NEW YORK ILLUSTRATED NEWS.

on their government on the principle of the equality of men. We think slavery is morally wrong, and a direct violation of that principle. We all think it is wrong. ***Every man, black, white or yellow, has a mouth to be fed and two hands with which to feed it—and that bread should be allowed to go to the mouth without controversy."¹

And then a few passages later:

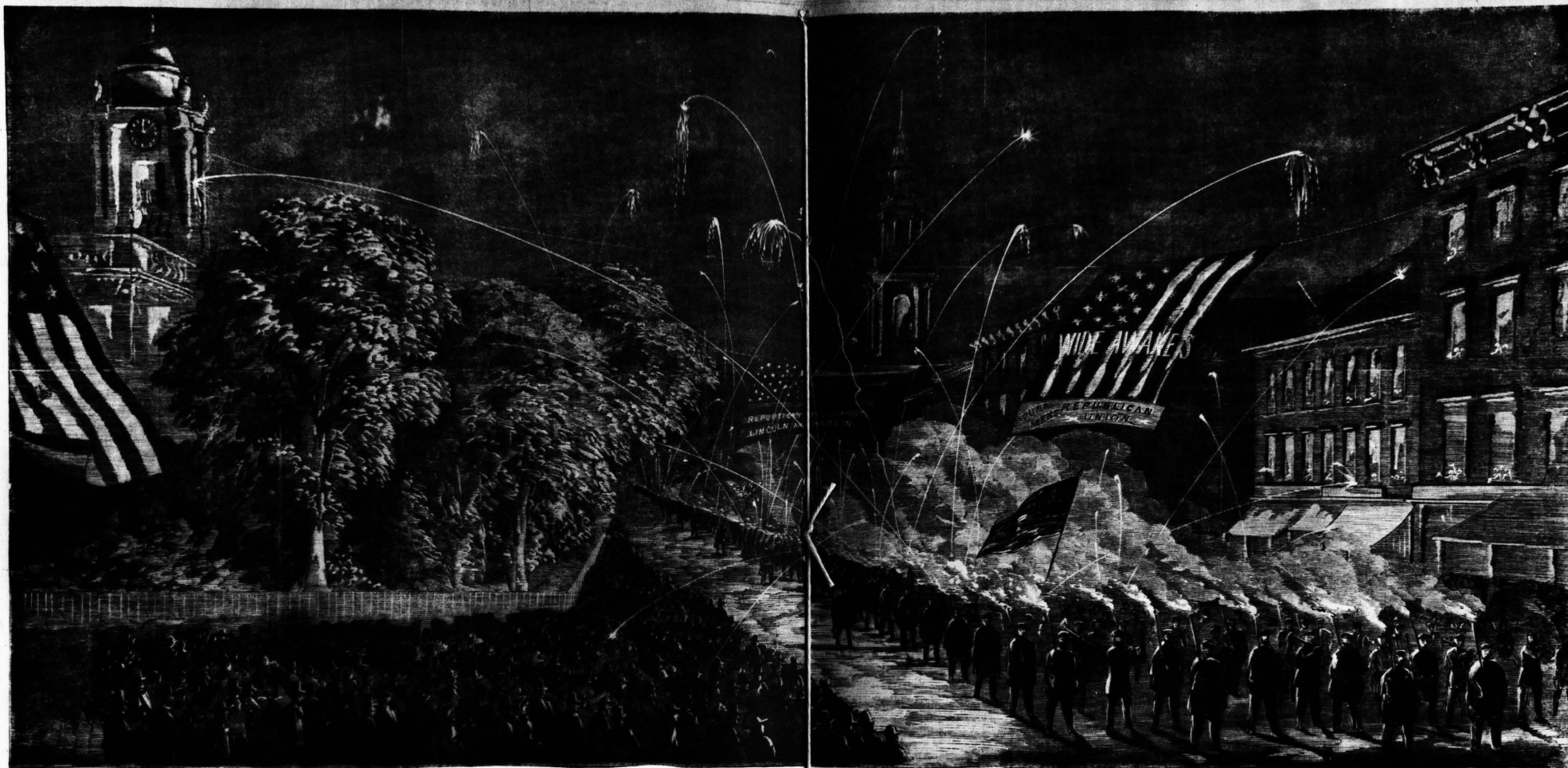
"Some men would make it a question of indifference—neither right nor wrong—merely a question of dollars and cents—the Almighty has drawn a line across the land, below which it must be cultivated by slave labor, above which by free labor. They would say: 'If the question is between the white man and the negro, I am for the white man; if between the negro and the crocodile, I am for the negro.' There is a strong effort to make this policy of indifference prevail, but it cannot be a durable one. A 'don't care' policy won't prevail, for everybody does care."²

Then later he suggested the remedy:

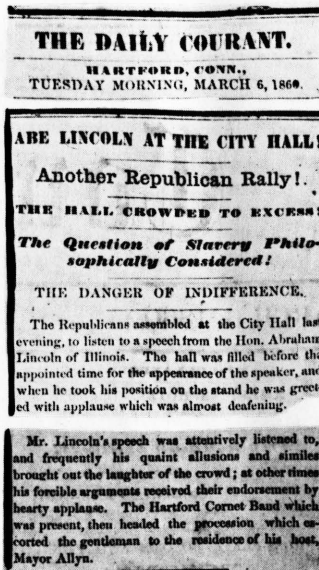
"If the Republicans, who think slavery is wrong, get possession of the general government, we may not root out the evil at once,

¹ *Hartford Courant* version

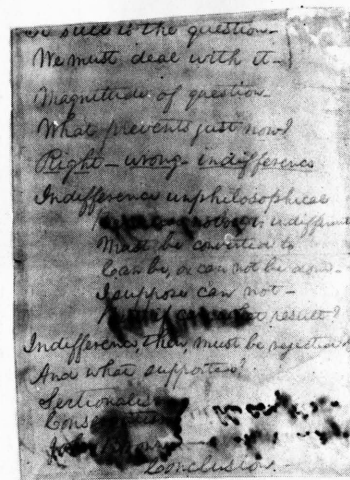
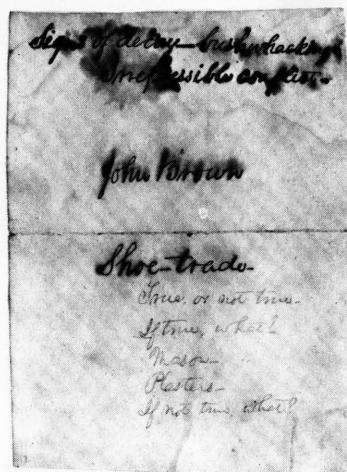
² *Hartford Evening Press* version



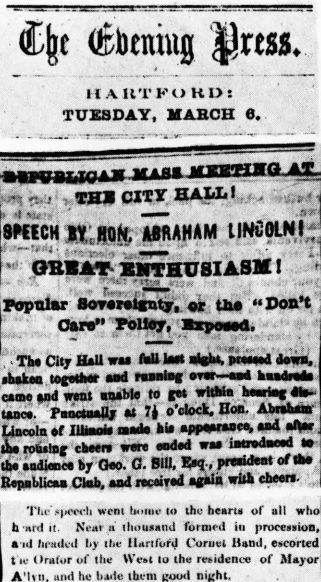
A two-page spread in the New York ILLUSTRATED NEWS showing the "Grand Torchlight Procession of the Wide Awakes, at Hartford, Conn., on the Evening of Thursday, July 27." Sketched by the paper's own artist, sent to Hartford to record the event.



The morning following Lincoln's speech the local newspapers, in addition to quoting from the talk at some length, made these editorial comments.



These notes were used by Lincoln in his Hartford speech. Left on the table, they were preserved by Jesse H. Lord, reporter for the HARTFORD DAILY TIMES. They are now in the collection of Elsie O. and Philip D. Sang.



but may at least prevent its extension. If I find a venomous snake lying on the open prairie, I seize the first stick and kill him at once. But if that snake is in bed with my children, I must be more cautious—I shall in striking the snake, also strike the children, or arouse the reptile to bite the children. But if the question is whether to kill it on the prairie or put it in bed with the children, I think we'd kill it." (Cheers and Laughter.)¹

In closing, he paraphrased his concluding sentence in the Cooper Institute speech—

"Eternal right makes might—as we understand our duty, let us do it!"¹

As Lincoln left the hall amid great applause, he forgetfully left his notes upon the speaker's table. A reporter picked them up and thus they were preserved for posterity.

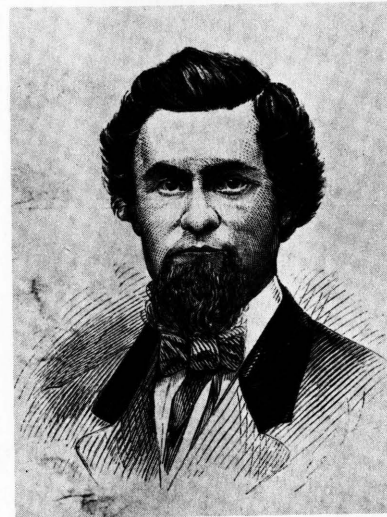
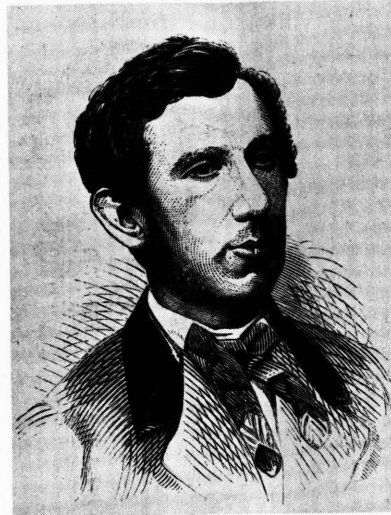
As he entered the waiting carriage of Mayor Allyn, a procession of "a thousand marchers" was being formed. The Hartford Cornet Band was in position testing their instruments and about 20 to 30 young men with glazed black caps and capes and swinging torchlights were encircling the carriage. For them, it was to be the first procession of the newly organized Hartford Wide Awakes.

The state elections in Connecticut and several other New England states were considered to be very crucial for the Republican Party. William A. Buckingham, a rubber goods manufacturer of Norwich, was the incumbent Governor and the Republican candidate. Pitted

¹ Hartford Evening Press version



Grand Banquet held by the "Wide Awakes" of the New England States and New Jersey, at the City Hall of Hartford, Conn., on the Evening of Thursday, July 27. Sketched by a staff artist of the NEW YORK ILLUSTRATED NEWS.



OFFICERS OF THE
HARTFORD "WIDE AWAKES"

upper left: C. V. R. Pond,
Recording Secretary and
Captain's Aid.

lower left: H. T. Sperry,
1st Aid and Correspond-
ing Secretary.

upper right: James S. Chalker,
Captain

against him as the Democratic candidate was the popular Thomas H. Seymour, who had been President Pierce's Minister to Russia. The campaign attracted outside money and brought in visiting speakers.

The first of these was the Hon. Cassius M. Clay, noted abolitionist from Kentucky who spoke in Hartford at Touro Hall on February 25, 1860 on behalf of the Republicans. A torchlight procession was formed to escort him from Mayor Allyn's house to the hall. As the procession passed Talcott and Post's Dry Goods Store at the corner of Pratt and Main Streets, several clerks from the store who were marching in the procession, procured squares of black cambric cloth from the store to protect their clothing from the oil dripping from their torches. As they took their places in the procession, they draped the cambric around their shoulders and hats. The Marshal of the parade, Col. George P. Bissell, afterward of the 25th Connecticut Infantry, noticing the striking appearance of the young men, placed them at the head of the procession. At one point there was jeering from spectators and one of the young men was knocked down by his torch which had been wrestled from his hands, resulting in a severely lacerated forehead. When the parade ended, it was suggested that a company of men be organized and dressed in like outfits to serve as a Republican marching organization.

On Saturday, March 3rd, a group of 36 young men met at the club headquarters on the third floor over Buck's Drug Store on Main Street, one door north of the Phoenix Bank. A Constitution was adopted and officers elected. The Constitution provided that "each member shall provide for himself, at his own expense, a glazed cap and cape, and shall pay into the treasury the sum of seventy-five cents, which shall entitle him to the use of a torch for parade." Someone brought to the meeting a new type of torchlight devised by a Hartford tinsmith, Leonard Pitkin. Patented under the title "Improved Frame For Swing Lamps and Torches," the oil reservoir was suspended from the frame in such a way as to permit it to swing in all directions. It was adopted as the official torch. In casting about for a name for the organization, someone recalled that William P. Fuller, city editor of *The Courant* had referred to the group of young men as "Wide Awakes."¹

The idea had a name and the Hartford Wide Awakes was a going organization. Within weeks, their numbers were swelled to "several

¹ *Hartford Courant*—March 3, 1860

hundred" and on July 27, over "two thousand" Wide Awakes from Hartford and from cities as far away as Newark paraded the streets of Hartford in torchlight procession. Soon Republican Clubs all over the country were adopting the "Wide Awake" name and one of the most colorful and potent political forces in our campaign history was in full swing. Exactly one year from the day, these few young men in Hartford with their homemade oilcloth uniforms escorted Lincoln to Trumbull Street, they were to escort him down Pennsylvania Avenue to be inaugurated President of the United States.

Lincoln, no doubt unaware that political history had been made the previous evening, arose early. He read the favorable account of his speech in *The Courant* and walked up to the offices of the *Evening Press* where he conversed with Gideon Welles for about an hour. In mid-morning, Mayor Allyn's carriage took him for a visit to Colt's Armory and to Sharpe's Armory. He returned to the Allyn house, secured his valise and departed on the train for New Haven for his next speech that evening.

In that city, he repeated substantially what he had said in Hartford to another enthusiastic audience. His speech was reported in full in the *New Haven Daily Palladium* of March 7, 1860. He was a guest at the home of the editor, James F. Babcock, who was to be of great assistance to him in the ensuing presidential campaign.

He journeyed back to Meriden to speak on the next day, March 7th, in such haste that he overlooked an appointment for a photograph by Beers and Mansfield of New Haven to whom he later professed no "intentional disrespect." The next day, March 8th, he spoke at New London and Woonsocket, Rhode Island. Out of deference to Governor Buckingham he spoke at Norwich on March 9th where he was introduced as "the next Vice President of the United States." He traveled to Bridgeport for a speech on Saturday, March 10th and from there returned to New York on Sunday, March 11th to hear Beecher preach again. March 12th he started home where he arrived on March 14th to find requests for many more speeches to which he replied "I very much prefer to make no more speeches soon."

No one can doubt the political significance of Lincoln's trip to the East in the spring of 1860. The excellence of his New York speech, delivered in the home state of the favored candidate for the Republican presidential nomination William F. Seward, transformed the public

image of him from a back-woods politician to a national figure. In fact, Lincoln himself, stated later that the New York speech and photograph probably made him President. The effect of his effort on behalf of the Republicans in the New England states is problematical. They lost Rhode Island to the Democrats; won New Hampshire and in Connecticut, Buckingham squeaked through by a reduced majority of 541 votes.

In Hartford where Lincoln delivered what has been called his second best speech of the tour, his visit brought into being the first great political marching organization which provided a great deal of enthusiasm and strength for his presidential campaign. And Robert, the son, said later, many times, that he made his father President by his academic failure as otherwise he would not have come East.

